*** NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA ***
*** Number 43: Two New Search Engines ***

Readers who have been paying attention (both of you) will remember that I wrote about search engines -- specifically, "meta-search engines," back in Internet Extra #29. Well, I'm back on the search engine soapbox, talking about two novel web search tools that you'll want to check out.

-.-.- NewHoo -.-.-

NewHoo looks and feels a whole lot like a certain other web index that you've probably heard of. It starts with a familiar Yahoo-like directory of web sites: grouped into categories like society, games, science, and shopping. You can dig down through sub-topics to find web sites of interest.

The key difference between NewHoo and Yahoo is who's in charge of picking and organizing sites. At Yahoo, sites are organized by editors who work for Yahoo. NewHoo is organized by the teeming Internet masses. In fact, literally anyone who wants to do so can make himself a NewHoo editor for a category that interests him, then add and organize sites in that category.

The idea is to let people who are truly interested in a topic manage that category on NewHoo. Those people are likely to know what sites are worth listing and how to best organize that category. The Newhoo mantra is that a diverse, worldwide corps of volunteer editors can produce a better directory than a small, pad editorial staff. NewHoo calls itself a self-regulating republic where experts can collect their recommendations, without including noise and misinformation.

NewHoo's directory is small compared with Yahoo, but NewHoo generally contains links to higher quality sites. It may not have links to every society, games, science, or shopping site, but chances are with NewHoo you'll have to try fewer of them before you find the information you're looking for. Its creators hope to eventually have a web catalog that is much larger and more comprehensive than Yahoo's. That kind of size might be an asset, but for now, I think its relative smallness is the asset.

If you think a category isn't up to snuff, you can make yourself an editor and make it a little better. Categories can have multiple editors. Some choose to devote many hours to honing their categories while others just tweak their category during the occasional a spare moment.

NewHoo is both a great concept and a well-implemented one. Check it out next time you're searching for something on the Web: http://www.newhoo.com.

-.-.- Ask Jeeves -.-.-

"Why do birds suddenly appear every time you are near?" Of the many questions that I've asked Ask Jeeves, this is one of the very few that it couldn't provide a good answer for. (No wonder. It's a silly question.)

But for many other sorts of questions, Ask Jeeves is a fine tool that can help deliver the answers. It helps to think of Ask Jeeves as more of a research tool than traditional search engine. What's unique about Ask Jeeves is that with it,

you can phrase questions in natural language. Unlike most other search engines, Ask Jeeves doesn't like arcane search strings like: "American Samoa" +map. Instead, you can just type the question "Where can I find a map of American Samoa?"

Ask Jeeves looks at your question and tries to figure out what you want to know. In a moment, the site returns a list of questions that it can answer, ones that it thinks you might want answered:

   Where can I find information about the island American Samoa?
   Where can I find a concise encyclopedia article on American Samoa?
   Where can I find a map for the territory American Samoa? (Aha!)

When you spot the question that is exactly what you want to know, click on the Go! button next to it and Ask Jeeves will display the answer.

Here are some other questions that Ask Jeeves can answer:

   How many feet are in a mile?
   How do you say "I love you" in Swedish?
   When did James Dean die?
   Why is the sky blue?
   Is the year 2000 a leap year?
   How do I make a paper airplane?
   What is the text of the 1st Amendment to the Constitution of the United States?
   Where can I find tables listing the nutritive values of different foods?
   Can you get AIDS from kissing?

The site draws from its own database of information, and also queries other search engines, giving easy access to what they find, too. When you're looking for an answer to a specific question, Ask Jeeves can provide the answer without fuss.

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NewHoo: http://www.newhoo.com

Ask Jeeves: http://www.askjeeves.com

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The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet New Users Forum (GO INETNEW) in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to savetz@compuserve.com (74774,2725).

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